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Jane F.

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This book belonged to Miss Jane Fletcher, who died in 1864,  
and was the only <sup>known</sup> survivor of those who had worshipped  
in Kay Street Chapel, Liverpool, from which the congregation (unwillingly) <sup>was</sup> removed to Paradise Street Chapel in 1791.  
It was given to me by Mr. Arison.

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1. Ordination of Yates and Anderson 10 Oct 1777  
Sermon - Dr Enfield. Charge - Rich<sup>d</sup> G. [unclear]
2. Earthquake Sermon - John Pope 21 Sept 1777
3. Funeral Sermon on John Sallway - Dr Enfield
4. Centennial of Revolution Sermon - Dr Enfield 5 Nov



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A N  
ORDINATION SERMON  
A N D  
C H A R G E.



ORDINATION SERMON

C H A R L E S



AN APOLOGY FOR THE CLERGY, AND PARTICULARLY  
FOR PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS:

A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE  
O R D I N A T I O N

O F  
THE REV. JOHN YATES, *(Kear Street)*

A N D  
THE REV. HUGH ANDERSON, *(Toxteth Park)*

IN LIVERPOOL, OCTOBER 1, 1777;

BY THE REV. WILLIAM ENFIELD, LL.D. *(Bennet's Garden)*

W I T H A  
VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER,

I N A  
C H A R G E

DELIVERED ON THE SAME OCCASION,  
BY THE REV. RICHARD GODWIN. *(Gateacre)*

W A R R I N G T O N :  
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MDCCLXXVII.





## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

*THE importance of the topics discussed in these Discourses might perhaps be admitted as a reason for making them public: but besides this, the Authors have inducements of a more particular nature, which they think it necessary to explain.*

*MANY prejudices against the Ministers of Religion have arisen out of the groundless claims, and the improper conduct of Priests in all denominations; and the whole order has suffered in the public estimation from the faults of individuals. It was therefore apprehended, that it would be a seasonable service to the cause of religion, to endeavour to place the clerical character on its true foundation, and to exhibit a genuine portrait of the Christian Minister.*

*THE whole body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers have, particularly of late, been without distinction considered as belonging to the numerous, and daily increasing tribe of Fanatics. This treatment appears to us, to say the least, injudicious; and renders it necessary for those who are ambitious to be considered as steady friends to free inquiry and rational religion, to offer something in their own justification; at least so far as to inform those who may need the information, that even among us, some attention is paid to liberal science and polished manners, and that all dissenting ministers are not methodists or fanatics.*

THERE



## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THERE seem moreover to be peculiar reasons at present for declaring our entire disapprobation of that dogmatical and censorious spirit, which many who call themselves dissenters discover; and our full conviction of the inconsistency of condemning others, for making use of that right of private judgment which we all claim for ourselves. It is not merely out of civility, but from principle, that we never return those censures, which some of our brethren so liberally bestow upon us. At the same time we think ourselves at liberty to justify our own mode of preaching; and to declare it as our opinion, that the cause of Christianity is better supported by inculcating the obvious principles and plain duties of religion and morality, than by insisting upon subjects of doubtful speculation, or by soaring beyond the reach of common sense into the regions of mysticism and rhapsody.*

Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis,  
Tempus eget.

A N  
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ROMANS XI. 13.

I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE.

**I**N entering upon my present design, I feel the same kind of embarrassment, which every one must have experienced, who has found it necessary, at any time, to become his own apologist: for I am aware, that it is natural to regard the man who undertakes to determine the merit of the profession, or the order, to which he belongs, as too much interested in the cause, to be capable of performing the duty of an impartial judge; and consequently, to conceive of him as not so much the advocate of truth, as the herald of his own praise.

THERE may, however, be occasions, when it shall become expedient for an individual, or a body of men, rather than submit to unjust reproach or ridicule, so far to break through the restraints of modesty, as to undertake the disagreeable task of self-defence.

THAT



THAT such an occasion doth at present arise with respect to the general body of the Ministers of Religion ;—that the clerical character is in the present age treated by many with a degree of neglect and contempt which demands animadversion, cannot, I think, be called in question by such as are at all acquainted with the world.

It is indeed true, that there are many who are disposed to distinguish and reward merit in this profession, as freely as in any other ; who retain so much reverence for religion, as to treat its faithful ministers with cordial respect, “ esteeming them highly in love for their work’s sake”. It is also true, that every clergyman of liberal education, polished manners, and good moral character, may from the candour and urbanity of the times, assure himself of meeting with attention and regard for the sake of his external address, his learning, or his probity, from multitudes who would ridicule the idea of paying him any kind of respect on account of his sacred profession. Nay, it is even true, that there is still remaining among the vulgar of all sects, so much of the *old leaven* of superstition, that a respected minister of religion will sometimes be obliged to receive from them a weak and servile kind of homage, by no means acceptable to a generous mind.

NOTWITHSTANDING all this, however, it is on the other side unquestionably true, that among the unprincipled and licentious it is a fashionable mark of a free spirit, disentangled from the shackles of religious education, to ridicule the priesthood and its officers ;—that with many persons of a truly liberal and philosophical turn of mind, it is a fixed opinion, the result of speculation, that the institution of a distinct profession for the purpose of teaching the principles and conducting the offices of religion is unnecessary, and consequently the whole clerical order an encumbrance



brance upon the state;—and that, besides these there are not a few, who without any direct intention to cast contempt upon the character of the christian minister, or any settled doubts concerning its utility, allow those to whom this character belongs, a degree of estimation, and a portion of respect, inferior to that which would have been granted to the same individual in some other walk of life. These indubitable facts rendering an apology for the clerical character necessary, and the occasion of our present meeting affording a proper opportunity for this purpose, I shall venture to undertake the task, with perfect confidence in the goodness of my cause, and the candour of my audience.

IN pleading the cause of the clerical body, let it not be supposed, that I mean to stand forth as an advocate for those high claims to spiritual dominion, which were so universally assumed in the early ages of the christian church, and which have not indeed to this day been wholly relinquished. All pretensions to apostolic authority transmitted by uninterrupted succession from age to age, and all the privileges supposed to be appropriated to the clerical order by this authority; every claim of infallibility in judging of matters of religion, or of an exclusive right, to prescribe articles of faith and modes of worship to the general body of christians, or to confer peculiar powers and dignities on ecclesiastics; I regard as originating in the ambition and avarice of interested men, who have artfully devised, and successfully employed, this expedient to enslave the minds of the ignorant vulgar. And I consider it as one of the most happy effects of the prevalence of knowledge and free inquiry, that the grounds of these claims have been examined and found insufficient for their support, and that, consequently, the pillars of priestcraft have been so violently shaken, that it is probable the whole edifice will in time fall to the ground.



NOR let me be understood as attempting to justify or excuse the *conduct* of priests, which, it must be owned, has often been shamefully inconsistent with the nature of their office, and entirely subversive of its design.

IN the history of the church, we see its ministers, who have professed to act under the authority of the benevolent Saviour of the world, combining in a destructive league against every valuable possession, and important interest of mankind. We see them making encroachments upon property, by requiring men to devote a large portion of their wealth to the maintenance of a numerous body of indolent ecclesiastics, and the support of an expensive religious ceremonial. We see them interrupting men in their useful labours, by annexing to the seasons consecrated to religion by divine authority, a long train of holy fasts and festivals. We see them depriving men of their natural share of personal enjoyment, and subjecting them to unnecessary hardships, by enjoining abstinence, pilgrimages, and voluntary corporal severities, as means of appeasing the displeasure, or obtaining the favour of Heaven. We see them invading the civil rights of mankind, by taking into their own hands the sword of the magistrate, and even giving law to kings, and disposing of empires. We see them discouraging the free exertions of reason on the most important subjects, and precluding as far as they are able all farther search after religious truth, by the coercive prescription of one system of faith for every understanding. We see them disturbing the peace of weak and uninformed minds, by filling them with a thousand unnecessary scruples and fears. We see them diverting men's attention from the most important duties of life, and weakening the influence of the moral principle upon their minds, by leading them to place their hopes of future happiness on other foundations than a virtuous temper and character. Lastly, we see them suppressing, and, as far as it is in the power



power of system and authority, destroying the sentiments of generosity, compassion and humanity in the hearts of men, by teaching them to deal out censures and *anathemas*, and to inflict all the diversified terrors of inquisitorial vengeance, on each other, in the name of God, and in support of the true faith of Christ.

EVERY real friend of human nature must look back with horror on these fatal effects of priestly domination. To attempt an apology for such a priesthood, would be to become a partaker of their guilt. Far different from this is the priesthood which the Divine Author of our religion instituted, and which it is my design in this discourse to vindicate. The order of men for whose profession I am an advocate, whose "office I magnify," are persons, who have devoted their lives to the service of virtue and religion, and whose employment it is, to conduct the public offices of devotion, and deliver to the people useful lessons of moral and religious instruction.

As necessary previous qualifications for this important service, it is supposed, that in a regular course of study they have acquired a competent knowledge of the principles of religion and the arguments on which they rest; the design and spirit of christianity, and the important doctrines which it teacheth; the powers and operations of the human mind; the nature and sources of moral obligation, and the several branches of virtue; and that by a long and vigorous exertion of their intellectual and moral powers, they have formed the habits of studious thoughtfulness, manly sobriety, and active benevolence.

THUS qualified, they enter upon the duties of their office with a steady purpose to employ themselves as servants of mankind in their most important interests. Observing the state of religious and moral knowledge in the world, and particularly in the socie-



ties with which they are immediately connected, they labour to interest their hearers in the search of truth; direct their inquiries into the track which will be most likely to conduct them to useful knowledge; and guard them against such prevailing errors as appear to be most dangerous in their tendency. Having made attentive and judicious remarks on the characters and situations of individuals, in order to discover what vices are most prevalent, by what false principles and mistaken views men are most frequently misled, and by what temptations they are in the greatest danger of being seduced; they suit their public addresses to the character of the times and the circumstances of their audience, strongly marking the manners of the age, and dealing out to every class of hearers, their proper portion of instruction, advice, or reproof. Sensible of the great benefits which must arise to mankind from having steady principles of action, and strong feelings of moral obligation; they employ all the powers of reasoning and persuasion to impress upon the minds of men a full conviction and lively perception of important truths, and to inspire them with all those manly, generous and pious sentiments, which are the soul of a virtuous character. Regarding the offices of devotion as chiefly intended to establish in the hearts of men an habitual veneration for the Supreme Power, and to cherish the principles of religious gratitude, resignation and obedience; they perform these services with that modest simplicity and decent solemnity, which best agree with the sacred nature, and are most conducive to the important ends of religious institutions. In fine, considering themselves as placed on an eminence in the full view of the world, and as called by Providence to sustain a character, to which the ideas of purity and dignity are naturally annexed; they carefully abstain—not indeed from those innocent gratifications which only scrupulous weakness, or sour and rigid bigotry would prohibit, but—from every approach towards licentious and criminal indulgence;

gence; they maintain a general propriety and decorum of conduct; and exhibit a fair pattern of all the virtues which their profession requires them to inculcate upon others.

SUCH is the outline of the character of a Minister of Religion: such the office which was instituted by Jesus Christ the great Preacher of Righteousness. Let any competent and impartial judge determine, whether the character be not in itself respectable, whether the office be not adapted to yield the most important benefits to mankind.

INDEPENDENTLY of the connection which this character hath with society, it will not be disputed, that men, who, from their education are possessed of a cultivated understanding, an improved taste, enlarged ideas and liberal principles, whose manners are regular and decent, and who practise all the virtues of private life, are entitled to some share of respect in the community of which they are members.

BUT the clerical character claims attention and regard, chiefly on account of its influence on the virtue and happiness of mankind, both in their personal and social capacity.

CAN it be doubted, that the generality of mankind will be much more likely to attain that happiness which is the chief end of their being, if they be judiciously instructed in their duty, frequently reminded of the obligations of virtue and religion, and strongly urged to obey them by every sanction which reason and revelation suggest, than if they be left at large, to follow the impulses of nature without assistance or restraint? May it not reasonably be expected that every repetition of the truths of religion, and of the maxims and rules of right conduct, every representation



tion of the pleasures and advantages of a virtuous character, and of the infamy and wretchedness which attend the practice of vice, should add new vigour to the virtuous principle in the minds of men, improve their moral sensibility, and strengthen their good resolutions? Rational ideas and sentiments, on the important subjects of religion and morality, frequently passing through the mind, can scarcely fail of leaving the tincture of wisdom and virtue behind them. The office of a public religious instructor is therefore, certainly, of great importance to the improvement and happiness of individuals.

AND it is no less evident that this office is highly useful to the public. Religious instruction, by pouring the light of truth upon the minds of the vulgar, as they are able to bear it, gradually contracts the empire of error and superstition, and rescues men from their yoke, which has so often been found to be grievous and insupportable. By cultivating their understandings, it softens their manners, and contributes towards producing that general civilization, which is the best security of the peace and happiness of society. By enforcing the practice of sobriety, chastity, industry, and the whole respectable train of virtues included under the general ideas of self-discipline and self-command, it lays a sure foundation for public order. By inculcating the principles and cherishing the sentiments of universal benevolence, it restrains those selfish passions which, in the degree wherein they are predominant, are injurious to the public. And by providing the firmest support of justice and equity in the principles of religion, it gives a stability to civil society, which could be derived from no other source.

THE clerical office being thus immediately adapted to maintain and strengthen every principle, on which the dignity, security, and prosperity of a nation depend, must be entitled to the countenance of every civil community; and the judicious and upright



upright minister of religion, instead of deserving contempt, as an idle drone, who lives upon the labours of others, may justly be ranked among the most useful and respectable members of the state. He has an unquestionable right to be at once regarded, as a friend to every individual, whose understanding is enlightened, whose principles are regulated, and whose manners are improved by his instructions, and as a fellow-labourer with the civil magistrate in preserving that order and virtue which are the only stable foundation of public happiness.

ALL this is so evident at the first view, that it is difficult to say on what grounds it can be disputed, or how it comes to pass that the clerical character is so frequently made an object of ridicule. Perhaps with some this may be the mere effect of prejudice against particular words. To such persons "the light in which these points should be exposed is, to consider the Clergy as so many Philosophers, the Churches as Schools, and their sermons as Lectures, for the information and improvement of the audience. How would the heart of Socrates or Tully have rejoiced, had they lived in a nation, where the law had made provision for philosophers to read lectures of morality and theology every seventh day, in several thousands of schools erected at the public charge throughout the whole country; at which lectures persons of all ranks without distinction were required to be present for their general improvement!" \*

ON the whole, the minister of religion, who supports the dignity, by faithfully performing the duties, of his office, is a character which every wise magistrate will countenance and protect, every true philosopher will approve, every good man will love, and none but unprincipled libertines, or superficial reasoners will despise.

It would be easy to pursue these arguments much farther, and  
to

\* Guardian, No. 130.



to show in a variety of particulars the importance and utility of the office of the christian ministry: but, contenting myself with these general views, I shall in the remainder of this discourse, attempt the vindication of that part of the clerical body, who dissent from the Church of England, and more particularly of those who, by way of distinction have obtained the appellation of *free Dissenting Ministers*.

As there is reason to apprehend that many both of the clergy and laity of the established church, have formed an unfavourable opinion of the Dissenters, merely for want of being acquainted with the true principles of our dissent, justice to ourselves requires that we should fairly and candidly declare them.

THERE cannot be a more unjust aspersi<sup>o</sup>n, than to charge us with separating from the establishment from a spirit of opposition to civil authority. Being professedly friends of *religious* liberty, it may naturally be supposed that we are not insensible of the value of *civil* liberty, or indifferent to the political rights of mankind. And among so large a body of men, it must be expected that individuals, while they are agreed in general principles, will form different opinions concerning their application in particular cases, and consequently concerning the measures of administration. But private opinions ought neither to be issued forth, nor to be received, as the sense of the body, or as necessarily arising from the principles of dissent: still less ought it to be inferred from hence, that the body of Dissenters is chargeable with disloyalty; for, amidst all the varieties of our political or religious opinions, I believe I may venture to assert, that we are unanimous in our attachment to the British Constitution, and in our allegiance to our Sovereign.

It is equally groundless and injurious to suppose, that our separation is the effect of a love of innovation and a desire of overturning the systems and forms which time has rendered venerable; of a weak and scrupulous attention to trifles; or of that petulant and uncomplying humour, which is fond of singularity and contradiction for their own sake. We are desirous that religion should receive every degree of countenance and support from the civil power, which is consistent with its nature, and with the true spirit of toleration: and there are many among us who, far from objecting to religious establishments as such, are of opinion, that an establishment might be constructed on such liberal principles, and placed on so extensive a basis, as to invite within its inclosure christian ministers and people of every denomination. But we find the present national establishment encumbered with many articles of faith, which, though generally received at the time when the Church of England was formed, upon more full and accurate examination have appeared, at least to great multitudes, to be wholly inconsistent with the true doctrine of Christianity. And we observe, that a full assent to these articles of faith is made the term of admission into the established church, and that they are intimately interwoven with its prescribed forms of worship. This being the present state of things, without taking upon us to condemn those who think it right to submit to these conditions, we choose rather to accept of the liberty of dissent, which the wisdom and moderation of our governors, and the tolerating spirit of the times (I wish it were in my power to add, the protection of the laws) afford us, than to submit to the burden, of subscribing articles, to many of which, in their natural and obvious meaning, our judgment cannot assent, and of performing certain offices of devotion, which in several essential particulars we cannot but disapprove.



It is a still farther reason with us for forming ourselves into a separate body, that the pursuit of truth appears to be attended with fewer difficulties, and there seems to be a fairer prospect of the advancement of religious knowledge, among those who disclaim all authority in religion except that of Jesus Christ, than among those who subject themselves to the restrictions of established creeds and systems. Apprehending that religious knowledge, as well as every other branch of science, is at present in an imperfect state; convinced that christianity will be useful to mankind only in the degree in which it is purified from corruption, and restored to its original simplicity; persuaded, that, in this instance as well as all others, the happiness of mankind will be advanced in proportion as their mental sight is cleared from the mists of error, and irradiated with the light of truth; we think it extremely desirable, that there should be an order of men who are at liberty to pursue this great object without encumbrance or restraint. We consider it as an important part of the character of a christian minister, in imitation of his Divine Master, to become as far as he is able, "the light of the world:" and we esteem it no inconsiderable advantage attending our separation from the established church, that it leaves us possessed of a full *external* liberty (without any other restraints than those which many Dissenters, inconsistently enough, lay upon themselves) to discuss every religious subject, to propose new opinions on doubtful points, or to make improvements in the forms of religion. We wish to be considered, as by profession friends of science and learning, and patrons of free inquiry; and we are happy in the idea, that by encouraging and promoting the unrestrained investigation of truth, we are doing our part towards hastening the period, when all absurd opinions and superstitious practices in religion, being no longer supported by the civil authority, shall be banished from the earth.

It



It now remains, that I add a few words in justification of one part of the body of Dissenting Ministers, against the insinuations and reflections not unfrequently cast upon them, by brethren who profess to be united to them by the common right of private judgment.

In the course of our religious enquiries we apprehend we have discovered reason, to disclaim many religious tenets, supported with great zeal, and some acrimony, by our forefathers; and to consider christianity as a plain and simple institution, established by Divine Authority, in which the important duties of morality and religion are clearly taught, and enforced by the powerful sanctions of future rewards and punishments. These views of our holy Religion, have naturally led us to consider it as the principal design of the christian ministry, to inculcate good morals, on the foundation of religious faith and hope. Accordingly, we have made it the great object of our public preaching, to explain the nature and enforce the practice of virtue in all its branches; and have studiously avoided all those speculative questions, which tend to divert men's attention from the plain duties of life; all those obscure and scholastic terms, which can only serve to raise the ignorant wonder of the vulgar; and all that mystical rhapsody of language, to which no distinct and precise ideas can be affixed. Because we are taught by reason and revelation to place the essence of goodness, in moral and religious principles, habits and actions, rather than in the exercise of emotions and passions; and because experience convinces us, that to make the degree of ardor with which the affections exert themselves in religious duties, the rule by which to judge of the characters of others, or even of our own, is uncertain and fallacious, and opens the door to all the weaknesses and extravagancies of enthusiasm; we are less concerned to agitate the minds of our hearers with strong feelings and glowing passions, than to engage them, by the plain language of instruction and persuasion, to lead a sober, righteous and godly life.



IN all this, we apprehend that we are acting consistently with the nature of our office, and adhering to the true spirit and design of christianity. We neither mean to betray the cause of our Divine Master, nor to accommodate his religion to the taste and fashion of the times. We think we render an essential service to religion, by divesting it of the terrors with which superstition had clothed it, and placing it before the world, disencumbered from the load of absurdities and follies, which ignorance, enthusiasm and priestcraft have, for so many ages, been piling upon it. And we judge, that in teaching good morals, and enforcing them by the sanctions of religion, we most exactly copy after the model left us in our Saviour's discourses, and most effectually pursue the great object of his religion; and consequently may with the strictest propriety be said to *preach the gospel*.

IF any of our brethren think otherwise; if they imagine that the cause of Christ is best supported, by perpetually insisting upon inexplicable mysteries, by indulging the natural propensity of the vulgar to superstitious scrupulosity or weak enthusiasm, or by vague declamations on topics which have no immediate connection with morality; let them enjoy their opinion, and pursue their plan of instruction in peace; provided only, that they be more sparing of their censures and anathemas against those who *have not so learned Christ*; and that in their zeal for the doctrines, they do not so far lose the spirit of the gospel, as to forget the precept of our common Master, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

WHAT hath been offered to your consideration in this discourse, hath, I hope, been sufficient to show the importance and utility of the office of the Christian Ministry. I must not, however, conclude without reminding you, that its actual usefulness must in a great measure depend upon the manner in which the people attend upon religious institutions.

THE



THE relation, my christian brethren, which is commenced between you and your minister is exceedingly important. The obligations arising from it on your part, are not of so trifling a nature, that they may be discharged by the regular payment of a sum of money, or by a certain portion of external civility. As the leader of your public devotions, your minister has a right to expect from you, a regular attendance on the exercises of religion, and a devout performance of its duties. As your religious instructor, he has a right to expect from you, full permission to discuss every important subject of discourse with the utmost plainness and freedom; an attentive and unprejudiced consideration of the arguments by which he supports his doctrine; a personal application of his practical lessons of advice or reproof, to your own characters; and a constant regard to his instructions, in the general course of your lives. This is the only adequate return you can make him for the services—the honest and faithful services—which, I doubt not, he will render you. And this, I am well persuaded, he will esteem an adequate return—an ample recompense.

BUT why do I insist upon the returns which you owe to your Minister? It is my duty on the present occasion, to remind you of higher and more sacred obligations.—You cannot neglect to improve the advantages which this relation will afford you for advancing in religious knowledge, virtuous habits, and the christian character, without doing violence to your own consciences, and trifling with your most important interests—without slighting one of the most valuable gifts of Heaven, and incurring the displeasure of Almighty God. For, what was said of the first apostles of christianity, is true of the faithful ministers of religion in every age: “These men are servants of the most high God, which do show unto you the way of salvation.”

SEE,



"SEE, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh" to you in the name of the Lord. "Take heed how ye hear." And "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only:" that in the day when both ministers and people must "render an account of themselves to God," ye may receive the everlasting reward of your obedience, "even the salvation of your souls."

Which may God, of his infinite mercy, grant! Amen.

A CHARGE.

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C H A R G E.

**T**O give advice, hath always been justly looked upon as one of the most difficult and hazardous undertakings in our intercourse with mankind. What then must it be, to advise those who are professedly to instruct others in the greatest concern of their lives? I feel this difficulty in all its force: but I enter upon this part of the present service with less reluctance, as it is in compliance with your request, in whose candour I have entire confidence—as I utterly disclaim all pretension to any mastery in understanding, and would apply to myself (allowing for difference of circumstances) the advice which is now to be given to you.

AFTER this acknowledgment (which comes from the heart) you will, I hope, patiently “suffer” from me “the word of exhortation,” and attentively consider a few hints which are the result of my meditations upon that important and comprehensive precept of the Apostle Paul to Timothy,

“TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF AND UNTO THY DOCTRINE.”

CONSIDERING the imperfection of human nature, and the difficulties



difficulties and dangers to which we are all exposed, there is no advice, I apprehend, so necessary to be given to mankind, as that one word, *BE CAUTIOUS*. But it comes home with peculiar force, to the breast of a young man who is liable to the greatest temptations, and hath the least experience, and often the least power in himself for his direction and support.

*BE* it still further observed, that the most critical time of youth, is the entering into a station, and the choice of an employment, probably, for life.—Need I remind you, my young friends, of that important station into which you have lately entered, or of the difficulty of that employment which you have undertaken? How natural must it be to you, at this season particularly, to think and to deliberate, to investigate your schemes, to enquire whether you have competent abilities for your employment; to lay up wise maxims of conduct, to confirm your habits of prudence and caution, and to examine accurately all your prospects of utility and happiness!

You rank among the principal of those who are building up human creatures to true wisdom, forming them to piety, justice, temperance, and all the virtues of a worthy and useful life, and gradually preparing them and yourselves for immortality. This, I will say, is a delightful and an honourable work; it is also difficult and important, if you consider that you are connected with the different and contrary humours of men, and that the religious sentiments and habits of many may probably receive their first and deepest impression from your instructions and example.—Take heed then, in general, to yourselves; and particularly to *YOUR PRINCIPLES, YOUR TEMPER and your CONDUCT*.

TAKE heed to your PRINCIPLES, I mean the views and motives  
by

by which you are chiefly to be governed in the future part of your lives.

THE springs which form the current of men's actions are a combination of principles, some more excellent than others; and characters are estimated by that principle which prevails, and by the degree in which it is prevalent. Do you then frequently inquire what ought to be, and what is, your leading principle in life.

PRIVATE Interest will powerfully solicit your regard. And an attempt, by all laudable means and in a proper degree, to secure the necessaries and conveniences of life, is certainly the dictate of the first and strongest law of nature. From the constitution and situation of mankind, and from the order of divine government, it is manifest that persons in general are to live by their occupations; and though the engagements between the societies of Protestant Dissenters and their ministers, may be thought of too ingenuous and delicate a nature, to admit of legal securities for the performance of promises; yet, through all the ranks of men, this truth is manifest, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire;" and all ministers of the gospel, while they discharge the duties of their office with general propriety, have an equitable claim to be supported by their profession.

BUT, notwithstanding all this, a regard to your private interest cannot, without evident weakness and inconsistency, be your principal reason for joining us in the ministry; because whatever advantages our profession may receive from knowledge, innocence, piety, virtue and contentment, it is not the road which usually leads to affluence. And surely, if our prospects were in this respect better than they are, it would be beneath your character, to make the gains of your office your principal motive in becoming mini-

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sters of the purest, most generous and spiritual religion, which was ever published amongst men.

IF self-interest should happen to fail, let us try the pretensions of Ambition to govern you through life.—If that which hath been justly reckoned the strongest and most active of all the passions, should meet with no indulgence in your breasts, it would indeed be wonderful. To desire to please, to improve, to excel, is innocent, necessary, commendable. It is a powerful incentive to industry, and to the practice of all the most engaging virtues, and affords a great and seasonable assistance to the most worthy principles of human nature. But its excesses are highly criminal and dangerous: and that you may not be deceived in this important matter, I will venture to point out some of their chief symptoms. And, besides all those which are common to the excesses of this passion in general, there are some appearances which are *peculiar* to *ourselves*; such as these, an extreme vehemence in performing all the public administrations of religion; the most cringing adulatory forms of address in private; maintaining an unsocial haughty distance from the greater part of the brethren; and frequently using certain phrases with a view solely to please a party, which may *possibly*, by an artful and forced explication, be made into somewhat rational, but are more likely to be understood in another common and obvious sense, which tends to strengthen superstition and to perpetuate error. These, and such as these, are some of the manifest symptoms of an excessive ambition in ministers of the Gospel. “But by their fruits,” with a little attention, they may be easily “known.”

I AGAIN earnestly intreat you to take heed to yourselves in this instance particularly; for this passion, in its greatest excesses, tends more to deceive ourselves, to impose upon others, and to corrupt the  
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the heart of man, than almost any other vice in the human breast. But, if you will be ambitious, I will point out to you an object which is worthy of your highest ambition. Be uniformly emulous of the distinguished approbation of the eminently wise and virtuous; and, if you must contend with your brethren, strive with them in all the offices of friendship, and in discharging, with the greatest propriety, all the duties of your profession.

THIS leads us to that which is the foundation of all worth in characters, and therefore justly challenges the precedence in the chief views of life—a hearty, steadfast desire to promote, in the best manner, the progress of truth, virtue, religion and happiness amongst men. Integrity, by way of eminence, is called *principle*: but, what with hypocritical disguises, and speculative refinements, it is thought to be upon the decline amongst us, at least not to keep pace with our intellectual improvements. Do you then, my young friends, instantly stand forth the sincere and steady advocates and supporters of true principle; for it is the basis of all order, peace and security in the civil and religious communities of men. Whatever may befall you, keep integrity always fast to your hearts; for it is at once the chief ornament and cordial of life; and like rare and valuable pieces of antiquity, will universally please mankind by its own native genuine worth, and unaffected beautiful simplicity.

HAVING suggested to you a few hints concerning your principles, I would offer you a word of advice concerning your TEMPER.

IN all the greater concerns of your lives, where you have time, and there is necessity for attention, it may be supposed that your best powers will be awake and vigorous, so that your virtuous principles and improved understandings will generally combine to direct and influence your conduct. But most persons, through a



great part of their lives, are off their guard, and at those seasons they are apt to act more from constitution and custom than from principle and understanding. Here nature is usually void of all disguise and restraint; here those habits are formed which are likely to influence men through life; here therefore by attentive observation, may be traced out some of those lines which principally mark the character.

To proceed; if you should be early disciplined in the school of Affliction, you will have an opportunity of practising, trying and improving those excellent, useful, manly and difficult virtues, fortitude, patience, prudence, equanimity, and self-denial. In such circumstances, "know how to be abased, and to suffer" distress. If you should be distinguished by Providence with good natural abilities, advantages of education, and success and respect in the world, bear these flattering distinctions with unfeigned humility; and, in prosperity of this kind as well as all others, "know how to abound." If you have great sensibility of temper (which your education and profession tend to increase) keep it under a strict and perpetual guard; for, in its extreme, it will afflict you with some of the most painful sensations of the human mind; and though, like acuteness in the lower senses, it may sometimes afford exquisite pleasure for a few moments, yet, in your intercourse with the rough manners and incautious behaviour of men, it will be likely more frequently to give you disgust and anguish of spirit.

If you be prone to anger, let it never appear at all but upon urgent unmerited provocation; and then, like a spark of fire, let it vanish as soon as it becomes visible: and upon no severity of ill-usage whatever, suffer it to rise into fury, or settle into malice and deliberate ill-will. "Can such malignant passions harbour

bour in spiritual and heavenly minds?"—Indeed under pressing, repeated and undeserved ill-treatment, religion will always allow, and self-defence may sometimes require, that you vindicate yourselves. But, in general, the most innocent, prudent, and, in all respects, the best return for the affronts and injuries of men, is to overlook them, and the wisest course which you can take, under the most false and cruel censures of others, is to "live so, as that no one will believe them." One of the greatest of all actions amongst men, is to return kindness for injury; one of the highest satisfactions of mind, is the exquisite bliss of reconciliation; and one of the noblest triumphs, is to "overcome evil with good." This is not only to disappoint, disarm and conquer the designs of evil men against you, but to subdue more powerful and dangerous enemies in the human breast, rage, revenge, and all the most violent and destructive passions, which lay waste the soul.

AFTER having given you some advice with respect to your principles and temper, let me exhort you to take heed to your CONDUCT.

It hath always been justly expected from men, that they excel in their profession. To be mere novices where they pretend to be masters, is lamentable and scandalous indeed. For a philosopher to be, in a great degree, destitute of wisdom; and for a christian, especially a Christian Minister to be wicked, is above all others, the greatest solecism in character. Take care then, that you are not among those who "say and do not;" but that you practise what you teach, and carry to a high degree of perfection all the virtues.

EXEMPLARY piety and universal goodness in ministers, will have  
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many advantages in common with the rest of mankind, and besides these, they will have some peculiar to themselves. A good life in you, my young friends, will be found by experience to be the easiest and most effectual method of prevailing upon others to be good. Here are no pretences to authority, no airs of a superior in office, nor any thing else which is likely to discourage or disgust tender and delicate minds; but the chief lines of an excellent character are justly and forcibly drawn, and held forth to public view; all which are left in silence, for imitation to copy. Here you may at once teach mankind what they are to do, and how to do it; and convince them, that by such beings as they themselves are, it is to be performed. Here you may exhibit the most excellent of all harmonies, a perfect concord between your instructions and example.

If, on the contrary, there should happen to be any inconsistency betwixt your discourses and lives, thanks to the watchful eyes of the people upon their ministers, it will not long pass unnoticed or uncensured. And, if you be habitually faulty in your conduct, you will be apt to give partial instructions from the pulpit; purposely omitting those duties in which you are defective, and conniving at your own faults and vices in those of your friends. For, how much soever you may disapprove, you will not dare to censure them, for those very instances of misconduct, of which in yourselves you are conscious: or, if you should ever venture to reprove them, it must be but seldom, with timidity, with an ill grace, and with little prospect of success.

With respect to the influence of example in ministers, hear the words of the Dramatic Poet:

————— “ You should be as salt,  
 “ To season others with good document;  
 “ Your lives as lamps, to give the people light.”

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To these general remarks upon private conduct, I will add a few particular observations: and, in the first place, let me advise you to adapt your *plan of life* to your *circumstances*.

DISDAIN not, my young friends, the humble, but useful arts of domestic life: neglect not to practise the important virtues of prudence, temperance, and good œconomy in the use and management of your property; the advantages of which you may easily learn, from the sad experience of those who have been either so careless, or so extravagant, as to disregard them. And, considering our station, taste and usual circumstances, there seems to be more than common occasion in us for frugality and self-denial. Besides, the general character and fashion of the times supply an urgent reason for this caution; for by what *virtues* soever this age and country are adorned (and I will say there are many) we have one popular *vice* which is at a great height, and is still prevailing more and more; I mean, an excessive indulgence, among all orders of people, in the most expensive appearances, and luxurious pleasures. This is the epidemical disease in the morals of this age; and it is matter of daily experience, and concern to our wisest and best friends, that many of the Ministers of Religion have caught the infection. What has been the consequence, but that many have been negligent in their duty, embarrassed in their circumstances, dissatisfied with themselves, and have sometimes made bold with unlawful methods to obstruct the natural consequences of their follies and vices? Do you, my young friends, take a different course, and, if possible, never suffer your expences to go beyond your income. What excellent examples to your brethren and mankind in general, may you hereby exhibit of a prudent, regular, steady and consistent conduct! With what dignity and independence of spirit, with what ease, convenience, satisfaction, and prospect of success, may you perform the several duties of your profession!



profession ! and with what propriety and courage may you inveigh against universal licentiousness, when, by your own exemplary prudence and moderation, you take the likeliest method to stem the torrent !

In the next place, let me advise you to *visit* the people to whom you stately minister.

It is not indeed often necessary, much less is it generally desired or expected by your friends, that you enter their houses in the peculiar formality of the ministerial character ; but rather that you visit them, in common, upon the easy and equal terms of acquaintance and friendship. Besides, it is generally thought a breach of good manners, often and abruptly to introduce into conversation the peculiar topics of a man's own profession ; because it is thought to be taking an unwarrantable advantage of the ignorance of the company, and arrogantly attempting to shine at their expence. But even in this our extremely nice age, you may perhaps sometimes be able with propriety to turn the conversation upon the important but unfashionable subjects of morality and religion ; or, if it may not often be easy for you to take the lead, you may safely follow, when they happen to be introduced by others. And, when these most sacred of all interests are mistaken by novices, or perverted by enemies, you may, you ought to stand forth as their avowed and steady apologists before the world.

But my principal view upon this part of the subject, is to advise you, as far as is consistent with a proper attention to your studies and other necessary engagements, frequently, and to a certain degree indiscriminately, to visit your hearers. By this means you will be likely to preserve the vigour of your faculties and spirits, to improve in the graces of conversation, and by gaining  
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upon the affections of the people, to strengthen and establish your influence with them in all the greatest concerns of their lives.

I HAVE just mentioned *conversation*; hear me further, with patience and candour, upon this important and delicate subject. In our Universities and Academies there are many good opportunities of improving in the sciences; and I congratulate this age, upon its peculiar advantages for useful and liberal education. But there is one branch of knowledge, of considerable importance, in which, from your past situations, you must have left much room for further improvement, I mean the knowledge of the world; to which I will venture to join one of the most important of all the arts (if it may be called so) the art of conversation.

OUR pious and learned fathers in the ministry, partly from an assiduous application to the peculiar duties of their profession, and partly from a recluse disposition, were many of them, in time past, inattentive to these *modern* arts and sciences, and some of them despised them; but it is too usual for men of all ranks, to depreciate advantages and excellencies which they cannot, or will not obtain. Do you, however, my young friends, condescend to regard these exterior accomplishments, with an attention proportionate to their respective importance. Study mankind, as you have opportunity and leisure, in the school of the world; but take care that you lose not your innocence and virtue in these studies; for the great art of life is, to have free communication with men, and "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." By means of frequent commerce with mankind, you may be able to exhibit moral portraits in public, drawn from the life, and in the words of the immortal *Bacon*, "to come home to men's businesses and bosoms."



LET me particularly advise you to pay a proper regard to all the usual forms of polite behaviour. Genuine good-breeding is justly looked upon as the expression of good-humour, good-will, and that most engaging accomplishment, urbanity; it is indeed, the finishing ornament of wisdom, piety and universal goodness, rendering them in the highest degree amiable.

It hath often been observed by some of the ablest defenders of our religion, that Christianity hath an admirable tendency to civilize the manners of men, and particularly to refine conversation. This it does chiefly, by so often and forcibly recommending humility, meekness and kind affection. Now a truly polite behaviour which hath its principle in the heart, is at once the lively indication and constant improvement of these endearing virtues. Let your religion have this effect amongst others, upon you, my friends, who are by profession dispensers of its important truths. Endeavour to distinguish yourselves by that graceful, guarded and attentive behaviour towards all, which is the best method of introducing yourselves to the notice and respect of mankind, and of giving the greatest influence to all your public administrations.

BUT in this, as well as in every thing else, let me caution you against the *extreme*; particularly against that mean, deceitful complaisance, which gives assent to known falsehoods, connives at atrocious wickedness, gratifies vanity, sacrifices integrity, and all this solely with a view to private interest and the pleasing of men. Remember that external propriety and decency of behaviour is nothing, unless it hath its principle in the heart, and that the smooth, hackneyed speeches of detected knaves and hypocrites, instead of being graceful and engaging, are universally ridiculous and detestable.

BEFORE I finish this important and extensive part of the subject,  
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permit me to give you a word or two of advice concerning *diversions*. Ministers, as well as others, may surely be allowed their amusements, under certain necessary limitations. And I will, without fear or scruple, recommend them to you, my friends, who are young. They are seasonable relaxations from all the severer studies, and of use to preserve your faculties, spirits and bodies in a vigorous and healthful state. Besides, you may perhaps, by this means, help to dissipate that gloom and severity which, especially in the eyes of the young, seem still to hover about religion in general and your profession in particular; and may, in time, give to both, a more cheerful, engaging and just appearance. And further, if, by partaking with your young friends in some of the innocent amusements of the age, you should find that you secure their regard and attention to you in the duties of your profession, you will not think the little sacrifices of your time to these inferior concerns entirely useless. But take the greatest care, that you always strictly observe the rules of discretion, and keep evidently within the bounds of innocence. Let all your amusements, if possible, be manly, at least harmless; and always consider them as amongst the lowest exercises in which you ever suffer yourselves to be engaged.

I SHALL conclude this general head of advice with a few words upon that important and very difficult part of your work, *reproving others for their faults*.

I INCLUDE this in the duties of your private character, because, whatever might be the case formerly, it can never, I think, in these times, be done in *public* with any prospect of success. It may irritate and exasperate; it may abash and make desperate; but, I believe, it will never convince and reform. What then is to be done? Must a fellow-creature, an acquaintance, perhaps a friend,



be suffered heedlessly to run on in the mad career of folly and vice all the days of his life, when, possibly, by a timely and seasonable caution, he might be restored by repentance to virtue, and thereby saved from falling into the lowest depths of wickedness and misery? No, my young friends! if no one else will minister seasonable advice, you will undertake this important work, and execute it with honesty, and with your utmost ability.

BUT to do this with success, you will generally find to be very difficult. Children will often bear with temper the direct reproofs of their parents, and inferiors will submit to the censures of rightful authority; but it may be your hard task to reprove those who are grown old in their follies and vices, and to censure an equal, nay, sometimes a superior. How this is to be done, must be left to circumstances, and your own impartial deliberate judgment: whether directly, or indirectly, or both, cannot now be determined; but *indirectly*, at least, it ought *always* to be done, by a hint, a look, or, if no other way, by an unusual expressive silence and reserve. In this nice and difficult undertaking, you will have need of your utmost caution and skill, and all the insinuating powers of address and persuasion. In a word, you must act like the honest, expert and compassionate surgeon, who, while he probes the wound to the bottom, mitigates every necessary severity with soft words, and applies every lenitive to soothe the patient, assuage the pain, and promote the cure.

I now proceed to the other part of the Apostle's advice to Timothy, "Take heed unto thy DOCTRINE."—But every one who undertakes to teach *others*, should *himself* be well instructed. And I will, in all justice and candour, suppose that you have already taken great pains, and had good assistance, in the study of human nature, which is excellent and useful above all others: that you have made deep and frequent searches into it; investigated and  
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arranged its affections, passions and all its powers; penetrated into its most secret recesses; and traced out its connexions, its duties and design in the order of creation. You have, no doubt, compared your own observations with the sage maxims of the antient moralists, and the most approved of later writers upon this subject, chiefly those who have drawn most freely from the pure and inexhaustible fountain of nature; and have formed for yourselves a system of ethics, principally from inward inquiry. I earnestly intreat you often to renew this study, that, by repeated and mature deliberation, you may digest your thoughts, and at last, settle your minds into full conviction and perfect tranquility.—Search and “keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of these are the issues of life;” the heart being, in an intellectual and moral as well as natural sense, that great reservoir, from whence are always flowing numberless little streams which constantly visit every part, and support and invigorate the whole.

Thus prepared, you will be well qualified for the study of the *Scriptures*, on which you have entered already, and to which, through the remaining part of your lives, all your other studies must be subservient. But here, as in morals, go to the fountain, and study the sacred oracles in *themselves*, making, occasionally, a cautious use of commentators and others, remembering that their's are only the works of common men. Teach not human systems for christian doctrines, but the precepts of Christ as they are in the Gospels; and enforce them chiefly by arguments and motives drawn from a future state. Where moral virtues are recommended from the pulpit by Christian doctrines, there I will venture to say that Christ is preached, and that this preaching is after the model of the best sermon in the world.

I CANNOT advise you often to introduce, in public, subjects of  
*Criticism*



*Criticism* and *Controversy*. As to *Criticism*, it will not, indeed, be amiss (as they come in your way) to explain the most difficult passages of Scripture, in as clear and brief a manner as you can, and to restore the true sense where it hath been wrong translated: but to take up the greatest part of your time in ascertaining the original meaning and grammatical construction of a few doubtful words, is, to say the least, a sad mispence of those precious moments, which afford an opportunity for much more important and edifying instruction. With respect to *Controversy*, it should like criticism, be *sparingly* used; for I will not say that it should *never* be introduced into the pulpit: on the contrary, if after deep study and deliberate meditation, you should be convinced, that certain prevailing opinions strike at the foundation of morality, and the most amiable perfections of the Deity; you may, nay you ought to contribute your part towards preventing the greater spread of these errors, and the establishment of them and their evil consequences in the world. But it does not become any of us, especially young ministers, to be decisive and peremptory upon subjects, which have been understood in different senses by many wise and good men.

You should be entirely free from anger and prejudice in all, and especially in these discussions, and harbour no design to support a party, or to gratify any unworthy passion whatsoever: on the contrary, while you endeavour to convince men upon these subjects with strong arguments, you should convey them in the vehicle of a soft and guarded manner.

BUT, after all, I would recommend to your *common* practice, a very different method of combating established errors in religion; which is to support, with all your power, the contrary truths. This indeed, is not so *open* a way with the enemy, and may not be so agreeable to the bold and eager spirit of youth; but, I think, it is much *safer*, and more likely to be successful.

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IN all your enquiries, especially upon subjects of religious controversy, be as indifferent as possible, on which side truth may happen to be found; and keep your minds, before-hand, as nearly as you can, in the state of an *even beam*, so that nothing but the weight of truth may be suffered to preponderate. Pay no reverence at all merely to the *age* of opinions, but entirely to the degree of evidence with which they are supported. You are not answerable for, the *last* act of your minds, receiving what you take to be truth, but you are accountable for your temper and conduct in the *pursuit* of it. Search after it then with all diligence and impartiality, and when you are convinced that you have found it, adhere to it, so long as you apprehend it to be truth, through good and evil report; and maintain it through life without any partial and interested views.

ASSERT and allow the rights of *free enquiry* and *private judgment*, and the liberty of every man to act for himself in religion; for these are the birth-rights of human nature; the distinguished privileges of the Christian and the Protestant, and the first claim of the Protestant Dissenter; a claim asserted by every one for himself;—would to God it had never been refused by any of us to any of our brethren! I exhort you by all the motives of reason, generosity and religion, to support, with all your influence, these first and most sacred interests of mankind.

By this means, amongst many others, you may assist in detecting the falshood of that charge, with which, for many years past, and particularly since the commencement of that violent contention which is now distracting the British Empire, the whole body of Dissenters have been indiscriminately stigmatised, I mean the charge of fanaticism. I trust the greatest number of the most respectable Dissenters (at least in this part of the kingdom) manifestly prove the falshood of the charge. If an impartial enquiry  
were



were made, there would be found, I believe, many among them as calm, rational and able defenders of moral and religious truths, throughout their whole extent, as amongst any other denomination of Christians. Do you, my friends, endeavour to distinguish yourselves amongst that number, and hold fast to the genuine principles of human nature and christianity all the days of your lives.

IF, in the course of your inquiries, you should see reason to adopt the system of our forefathers, you may expect, in general, every charitable indulgence to all your peculiar sentiments; that your pious zeal, and exemplary conduct will meet with deserved respect; - and that a veil of candour will be drawn over all your involuntary errors. If, on the other hand, you embrace and avow what are generally termed *liberal sentiments* in religion, you may depend upon the approbation, countenance and support of great numbers of the most respectable Dissenters.

AFTER all, bend your chief attention to the practical duties of Christianity; and frequently insist upon particular virtues and vices, those especially, which have the greatest effect upon the happiness of mankind, and above all, those virtues which are upon the decline, and those vices which are most prevalent amongst us. By this method you will take a direct aim at the hearts of men, and give less opportunity for the use of those secret arts of self-deception in your audience, by which many are apt to apply general eulogiums upon virtue to *themselves*, and general invectives against vice to *others*.

FURTHER still, let me advise you to have some one leading view in every sermon, of which you are never to lose sight; and also to take great care that the several branches, and if possible, every individual expression, be in such close connexion as to strengthen  
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and adorn the whole. I know, a few independent brilliant expressions may be convenient for a short memory, and a slight attention; but all those sermons in which these are the chief excellence, will be deemed inferior performances by the most discerning and judicious amongst your hearers. The former are like the glimmering of a single star or ray, the latter like the strong light of a constellation, or the full blaze of the sun-beams converging to a point.

BE a little sparing of words in your compositions; and in your delivery, endeavour to lay the proper emphasis upon them, not less, nor more than they deserve. Keep in mind that old sarcasm, "words and nothing else;" for next to the charge of false and corrupt sentiments, it is the severest of all satires. I am sensible, abundance of sound, though joined with a lamentable scarcity of sense, has been often known to gather, and sometimes to keep a crowd together: but many have strong passions; comparatively few, an improved understanding.

SERMONS, as well as all other compositions, have a style which is proper to them: it should indeed be accurate, but especially, it should be plain, strong, and above all, simple; for as in characters, so in style, particularly for the pulpit, the greatest excellence, I think, is simplicity. Affect not many high-sounding metaphors, nor laboured descriptions; if they offer themselves, make a sparing use of them; if not, you may, with entire safety, leave the effect to the nature, and just but unadorned display, of those most serious, weighty and majestic of all subjects, morality and true religion.

IN your public addresses, I wish you to be, and appear to be in earnest. What! shall numbers be zealous, even to fury in defence of doubtful and insignificant modes and opinions, and shall

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any of us be so languid in support of all the primary, unquestionable, and indispensable truths and duties, as if we were ourselves but half persuaded of their verity and obligation. Be you, my friends, and appear to be affected, if you would affect others ; but, in the ardor and extacy of your manner, guard against all unnatural and frantic gestures ; preserve the entire command of your voice and temper, and keep to yourselves, and leave to others, the use of understanding.

BEFORE I conclude, let me suggest to your serious consideration, a few obvious thoughts upon that most solemn and important of all religious exercises, Prayer. It hath been often justly complained of, that this truly sublime part of our public services hath by no means been properly attended to by Dissenting Ministers in general. Be you particularly careful to give it a degree of attention, worthy of its solemnity and importance. Endeavour to impress your minds more and more with a just and animated sense of the perfections and providence of God : this is the principal thing necessary in conducting the people's devotions with propriety and effect ; for, what is true in general, is particularly so here, when persons think clearly and frequently upon a subject, and are thoroughly engaged in it, they usually express themselves with force and perspicuity.

BUT besides this, there are other considerations which deserve your notice. Your devotional compositions should always be prepared with the utmost care. More particularly, simplicity of style is proper, and even necessary, to prevent any disagreeable effect from that want of variety which is inseparable from the nature of prayer. This circumstance will either not be perceived, or not regarded, when every thought and word is the natural sentiment and language of a pious heart.

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FROM these, which may be deemed essentials, I proceed to mention another caution or two which, though of less consequence, ought not, I think, to be entirely omitted upon this subject. Be careful to avoid that common practice amongst us, of speaking *of* God when you should be speaking *to* him; and guard against what is called *Preaching in Prayer*, or the use of any peculiar terms or direct forms of reasoning.

IN fine, let your expressions and manner vary with the different parts of this service. Endeavour in adoration to be sublime; in petition and confession to be humble, pathetic and plaintive; in thanksgiving lively and cheerful; and in all the parts which refer to mankind, let your hearts and your expressions glow with universal benevolence.

THUS I have endeavoured to sketch out to you some of the principal lines, which form the character of an able and excellent minister of the Gospel, leaving to you to fill up, embellish, and give the finishing hand to the picture. The standard of excellence hath been fixed high, to inspire you with resolution, not to damp the ardor of your spirits. Human nature, when sufficiently animated, is capable of great things, and of surmounting difficulties which, before-hand, were thought to be insuperable; but the timorous and faint-hearted, often make the impossibilities of which they are afraid. Begin your work with resolution, go on with diligence, and you may depend upon attaining no mean degree of perfection.

To conclude; You have seen a little stream, by receiving continually fresh supplies in its course, gradually form itself into a river, which visits and fertilises numberless adjoining meads, and becomes larger and larger until it discharges itself into the sea;

so



to a human character, small in its source, by new accessions of knowledge, piety, virtue, usefulness, honour and happiness, may grow to somewhat of distinction, and become greater and greater, as it rolls on through life, until at last it terminates in that boundless ocean, Eternity.

T H E E N D.

